Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Silent Meditation

The school day shall start with a minute of silent meditation. Teachers and students not participating will be expected to observe the courtesy of not disturbing others.

The Board further directs that an opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance shall be provided each school day. Participation in the recitation of the Pledge is voluntary.

The teacher will make the announcement in each classroom. Those students and teachers who do not participate may continue with their regular activities in a manner that does not disturb those who wish to observe the minute of silent meditation.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation.

PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance

Policy adopted: December 10, 2002

COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Colchester, Connecticut

Colchester Public Schools

INSTRUCTION
6115P

CEREMONIES AND OBSERVATIONS

Draft January 2022 - First Reading 1/26/2022
Replaces Existing Policy (CABE Model Policy)

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion, it is the policy of this Board that the public schools will, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion.

This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the public schools in fulfilling their responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The district also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the district will approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members should be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would prevent it.

As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, the Superintendent will, by October 1 of each year, certify in writing to the state that students of the District are not prevented by policy or rule from participating in constitutionally protected prayer. The Superintendent will ensure that the staff, parents/guardians and students are made aware of the parameters of acceptable religious speech and actions. The Superintendent will also distribute guidelines to each school concerning religion in the schools, after such guidelines/regulations have been approved by the Board attorney and reviewed by the Board.

Holiday Celebration and Observances

The building Principal is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. Pertinent information will be included in the student, parent, and staff handbooks.

Absence for Religious Observation

Student absences for religious observances shall be excused. Furthermore, such absences should not prohibit receipt of attendance related awards nor impact student grades or participation in school events.

Recognition of Religious Holidays

The objective study of religious holidays provides a natural opportunity to promote an appreciation for and respect of diversity. Learning opportunities should extend beyond Judeo-Christian beliefs; reflecting the diversity of global cultures.

1. Recognition of religious holidays will not dominate the educational program and must support curricular objectives.

2. All religions must be afforded equal dignity, but none advanced nor disparaged.

3. Decorations which are part of custom, that have no direct religious meaning (Christmas tree, Menorah) may be displayed. Tree decoration should not promote religion nor require student participation.

4. Programs should focus on seasonal rather than religious themes' inclusive of concerts, enrichment programs and Parent-Teacher Organization sales.

5. Performances which recognize holidays must be of an artistic nature, not religious. Religious music must not dominate any school program. Program selections should not, by their nature, exclude students from participation.

6. The Cafeteria staff will consider religious dietary restrictions when planning menus (non-meat meals, limiting pork to one menu choice).

7. Parents may exclude their children from programs involving the recognition of religious holidays or if celebration is in conflict with family beliefs. A written request for exclusion should be sent to the Principal.

Silent Meditation

The Board directs that the administration shall provide for students and teachers the opportunity to observe an appropriate period of time for silent meditation at the beginning of each school day.

Pledge of Allegiance

Students will be offered the opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag at least once during each school day. Participation in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance will be voluntary. Students may refuse to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance for any reason, including religious, political, philosophical or personal reasons. If a student chooses not to participate, he/she may stand or sit in silence.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-16a Silent meditation.
10-230 Flags in schoolrooms and schools. Policy on the reciting of the "Pledge of Allegiance."

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Policy adopted: December 10, 2002 COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Policy revised: Colchester, Connecticut